

Increasing State Funding of Local Education

As Senate Chairman of the Education Committee, I have been working very hard to increase state funding to our local school districts. The Education Cost Sharing formula distributes state dollars to towns according to relative wealth and student population.

TOWNS	Total Education Aid	Increase over last year
Cheshire	\$7,636,247	\$326,267
Meriden	\$50,822,863	\$1,675,422
Middlefield	\$1,691,930	\$71,655
Middletown	\$15,867,060	\$737,790
Totals	\$76,018,100	\$2,811,134

This year’s distribution substantially increased education funding to each of the towns in my district. This is very important since this money can otherwise only be raised through the local property tax base.

SAFER ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION LINES

The utility companies’ proposed expansion of overhead transmission lines from Middletown to Norwalk impacts every town in this district. Last January, I met with constituents at the Cheshire Library who are very concerned with the significant increase in the voltage transmitted over the lines proposed in the application pending before the Siting Council. I also met and spoke with constituents in Middletown, Middlefield and Meriden who also voiced strong objections.

After researching this project further, I discovered the utility companies proposed to bury 24 miles of these transmission lines in Fairfield County. I then went to public hearings held in Wallingford, Middletown and Hartford to testify that transmission lines in my district located near homes, schools and playgrounds should also be required to be buried. I argued that public safety and property values are just as important to my constituents as they are to the people in lower Fairfield County.

Working together with a bipartisan group of area legislators, we passed a bill this session that requires this proposal and subsequent transmission proposals to include an assessment of electromagnetic fields. Most important, the new law requires the Siting Council to establish a presumption that lines located near homes, schools, playgrounds and daycare centers be buried.



It’s important when citizens play an active role in speaking out on behalf of legislation that will directly affect their communities. That’s why I was especially pleased to have a group of concerned citizens visit me at the Capitol in the final days of the session to successfully lobby for the passage of the transmission lines bill.

SUMMER 2004

Dear Friend:

I’m pleased to report that the General Assembly passed a number of initiatives that benefit our district. Among those accomplishments were:

- Increased state funding for local education
- Legislation requiring the Siting Council to determine the feasibility of burying power lines located near homes and schools, and conduct assessments of the impact of electromagnetic fields
- Expanded pre-school programs
- Integrated ConnPACE with Medicare prescription drug programs
- Allowed Platt High School Seniors to graduate on the date they planned to despite having their school year interrupted by emergency roof repairs
- Ensured the portability of property tax benefits for veterans
- Authorized bonds for the completion of the Wilcox Vo-Tech High School expansion and renovation project
- Unanimously passed a Senate resolution to amend costly, unfunded mandates in the federal No Child Left Behind law



This newsletter will describe each of these initiatives in more detail. Although some predicted that our attention would be distracted by the impeachment inquiry, we worked together in a bi-partisan manner to complete our work.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please don’t hesitate to call my office.

Have a Great Summer!

Tom Gaffey

For my latest news, visit [www.senatedems.state.ct.us/Gaffey.html](http://www.senatedems.state.ct.us/Gaffey.html)

State Senator  
**Thomas P. Gaffey**  
DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER  
CHAIRMAN: Education  
VICE-CHAIR: Higher Ed. & Employment Advancement  
MEMBER: Finance, Revenue and Bonding;  
Legislative Management

Representing Cheshire, Meriden, Middlefield & Middletown

Senator Gaffey's Photo Gallery

**The Press Room**  
Senator Gaffey's corner of our Press Room includes recent press releases and his Press Kit.

**Legislation**  
A list of bills introduced by Senator Gaffey during the 2004 session can be found on the General Assembly Web site.

**Newsletters**  
Senator Gaffey's constituent newsletters (Adobe PDF format). Winter District-Wide (508k) Consumer Issues (187k)

**E-mail:**  
[Gaffey@senatedems.state.ct.us](mailto:Gaffey@senatedems.state.ct.us)  
**Phone:**  
860-240-0425, or toll-free 1-800-842-1420  
**Address:**  
Legislative Office Building  
Room 3100  
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

**ABOUT SENATOR GAFFEY**  
State Senator Thomas P. Gaffey was elected to a fifth term in

**Look & Listen**  
VIDEO

From your State Senator  
**Tom  
GAFFEY**

Legislative Office Building, Room 3100, Hartford, CT 06106-1597  
**Capitol Phone** 860-240-0425, or 1-800-842-1420  
**E-mail** [Gaffey@senatedems.state.ct.us](mailto:Gaffey@senatedems.state.ct.us)  
**Web** [www.senatedems.state.ct.us/Gaffey.html](http://www.senatedems.state.ct.us/Gaffey.html)



I’m proud  
to represent the  
**13th Senatorial  
district which  
includes the  
communities  
of Cheshire,  
Meriden,  
Middlefield and  
Middletown**

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STATE SENATOR  
**TOM GAFFEY**



# Continuing to Work for Connecticut's Future

## EXPANDING BENEFITS TO VETERANS

The Rocky Hill Veterans' Home provides housing to 500 homeless and needy veterans in Connecticut. This facility offers long-term health care, educational services, vocational testing and counseling, and rehabilitation services among other services to its residents. Unfortunately, there are numerous others who could use the services provided at this facility. This session we passed a bill that would increase the number of veterans eligible for admission to the state Veterans' Home and also increased the number of veterans eligible for burial in the state veterans' cemetery. For more complete information and eligibility criteria, please contact a Veterans' Service Officer at the Department of Veterans' Affairs toll free at (800) 550-0000, ext. 5893, or in the Hartford area at (860) 721-5893.

## TAX BENEFITS FOR VETERANS

The state of Connecticut has a long-standing program that thanks our veterans of foreign wars for their sacrifice by helping them out with a portion of their property taxes. With the adoption of this bill, veterans who move from one Connecticut town to another are assured that their veterans property tax benefits will remain in effect as long as they remain eligible. For all the service that our veterans have so selflessly provided for us and for our country, we know they deserve this small consideration.

## EXPANDING THE SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM

This year we expanded and enhanced the state's premier school readiness program by increasing the number of spaces available in the state's neediest 40 school districts, requiring more college-level training by credentialed staff, and making the hours required for student participation more flexible to better serve the needs of working families. By increasing funding to this important program, we make a wise investment in the future of our children and the future of our state.

## ADDRESSING PROBLEMS IN THE FEDERAL NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND LAW

While this federal law may be well-intentioned, it has huge unfunded mandates and unintended consequences that will cost Connecticut and local school districts hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars. The law also unfairly compares how Connecticut students perform on tests to students in other states who take tests that are far less challenging. Moreover, Connecticut's students typically perform far better than students from any other state on national assessments like the SAT and the NEAP.

This session, the state Senate unanimously adopted a resolution I authored that calls on Congress to create more flexibility in the federal law for top performing states like Connecticut, that already exemplify a commitment to high standards and strong accountability measures. I was also one of fifteen legislators from around the nation selected to be on the National Conference of State Legislatures' Task Force to recommend changes in the law to Congress. I participated in the first meeting in Washington D.C. and will be busy meeting with my colleagues from other states to recommend ways of changing the law to benefit our kids in school.



In April, my colleagues and I honored the members of both 2004 national champion UConn Husky teams and their coaches (including Jim Calhoun) at the State Capitol. The team reminds every elected official of how much we can achieve if we pull together for a common goal.

## MAKING MEDICARE AND CONNPACE WORK TOGETHER

NEW FEDERAL MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE BEGAN on June 1. For the next eighteen months, this coverage will take the form of privately-offered discount cards that will provide a range of discounts on needed drugs, and will also provide \$600 of assistance to low-income elderly to help them pay for what is not covered. Here in Connecticut, for almost twenty years, we have proudly offered comprehensive prescription drug coverage for qualifying elderly and disabled through ConnPACE. This session we enacted legislation that coordinates ConnPACE with the new Medicare benefit, to help reduce confusion among those who will have both benefits.



*This will ensure better integration of the programs and maintain patients' access to prescription drugs, without causing undue confusion.*

Participants will be able to have just one card to present at their pharmacies; a computer system will determine whether Medicare or ConnPACE is responsible for paying, and what, if any, co-payment is owed by the participants. ConnPACE recipients will never have to pay more than their current co-payment, and may pay less. This much-needed law will ensure better integration of the programs and maintain patients' access to prescription drugs, without causing undue confusion on the part of recipients. If you would like more information, please call ConnPACE at 1-800-423-5026, or Medicare at 1-800-633-4227, or visit [www.connpace.com](http://www.connpace.com).



## Wilcox Tech PROJECT AND PLATT HIGH'S GRADUATION DATE

This session I sponsored legislation authorizing bonds for the \$47 million expansion and renovation project at Wilcox Tech. This project includes an addition of approximately 65,228 square feet to include new and expanded trade shops, a two-story academic wing, media and fitness centers, asbestos abatement and site improvements. The new sports complex is nearing completion and will be ready for the next school year.

Platt's senior class had their last year interrupted by emergency repairs to the school's leaky roof. That interruption would have forced them to graduate later than the seniors had planned. I was able to pass special legislation allowing them to graduate on the planned night along with the other two Meriden high schools. Having their graduation on the same night allowed the Platt seniors to participate in "Project Graduation" which is an alcohol-free celebration with the graduates of the other two schools.